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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING PAPER

THE US ROLE IN SAUDI SECURITY

Within the framework of a fundamental political decision to work in close cooperation with the United States, Saudi leaders rely primarily on the US for foreign equipment, training and other services for their armed forces. The Saudis moreover see this security relationship with us as an integral and essential element in the overall relationship.

The United States has a longstanding security assistance relationship with Saudi Arabia, dating back to the signing in 1951 of a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement. The early years involved relatively small shipments of unsophisticated equipment and limited training, but subsequently our security relationship has developed to the point where US military personnel or civilian contractors are now the primary advisers for all elements of the Saudi defense establishment. A series of US surveys conducted in 1974 are the current basis for the force structure, weapons procurement and facility construction programs of the Saudi Armed Forces.

Our programs in Saudi Arabia fall within three major US military jurisdictions under the overall control of our Ambassador in Jidda. (1) The US Military Training Mission (USMTM) - Established in 1951 under the terms of the US-Saudi Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, and commanded by a Major General, has overall responsibility for activities within Saudi Arabia, related to FMS transfers of defense articles and services to the Saudi Army, Navy, and Air Force and for implementing and monitoring FMS sales. (2) The Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program. Commanded by a Brigadier General, this project involves the modernization of four battalions of the Saudi National Guard. (3) The Corps of Engineers. Commanded by a Brigadier General, the US Army Corps of Engineers Middle East Division provides engineering and management services for the construction of a wide range of facilities such as military cantonments, schools, hospitals, dependent family housing, headquarters buildings and ports. There are currently 793 employees (civilians and military) in Saudi Arabia.

Under government-to-government or private auspices, the US currently has major programs in Saudi Arabia to provide and maintain F-5 and C-130 aircraft; to provide 25 ships, base construction, training and maintenance for the Saudi Navy; to assist in maintenance of the Saudi Army vehicle fleet;

to mechanize two Saudi Army infantry brigades; to provide an Improved Hawk air defense system; and to modernize four battalions of the Saudi Arabian National Guard.

A number of US civilian contractors are working in the security assistance area in Saudi Arabia either through the FMS program or commercial sales agreements. Raytheon continues to manage the Hawk, and Lockheed the C-130 programs. Lockheed also maintains and provides training for an early warning radar system while Northrop acts as the prime contractor to the US Air Force in implementing the F-5 program. Whittaker Corporation provides operation and maintenance of three Saudi Army hospitals, and Litton is negotiating a contract to provide the AN/TSQ-73 "Missile Minder" air defense Command and Control system. There are currently approximately 3,000 US civilian contractor personnel in Saudi Arabia working in defense programs.

Future Prospects and Problems

Our security assistance program operates within an atmosphere of general Saudi confidence in the quality of our equipment, professional advice and services. The most serious problem is the continued shortage of trained manpower available to the Saudi armed forces. The Saudis have also expressed concern about cost escalations and delayed delivery on many programs. Beyond that we have had and will continue to have a significant problem in meeting Congressional concerns about large military sales in general and sales to Saudi Arabia in particular. The Congress continues to view Saudi FMS as a massive transfer of weapons and weapons systems and sees this as a potential threat to Israel, especially through the possibility of weapons being transferred from Saudi Arabia to other Arab states. In actuality, however, sales to Saudi Arabia through FY 76 of weapons and ammunition represent only 20% of total sales to Saudi Arabia for that period. The balance of sales cover training and services (17%) and construction (63%). The total value of FMS sales to Saudi Arabia is approximately $12 billion of which $10.4 billion is in the pipeline. Of this latter figure only $1.9 billion represent equipment and supplies; the remainder is for construction and services.

Sidewinders and Mavericks

During the summer of 1976 Congressional hearings were held on resolutions opposing the sale of Sidewinder air-to-air

and Maverick air-to-ground missiles to Saudi Arabia. The original US proposal to provide 2,000 and 1,500 of these weapons respectively was scaled down to 850 and 650 to accommodate vigorous Congressional opposition to the magnitude of the sale. We informed the Saudis of our decision to reduce the number of missiles we were prepared to sell them at that time, asking their understanding of the political climate. The previous administration assured the Saudis that every effort would be made to provide additional quantities of Sidewinders and Mavericks in the future. Further it made clear to the US Congress that the decision to scale down the number of Sidewinders and Mavericks at that time did not mean we would not propose additional sales in the future. Late last year the US Deputy Secretary of Defense received a letter from the Vice Chief of the Saudi Ministry of Defense requesting delivery of the outstanding Mavericks and Sidewinders. We replied that sale of these items is under review.

Advanced Fighter Aircraft

In 1974 the Assistant Secretary of Defense conveyed to the Saudis our agreement in principle to provide the Saudis with an advanced fighter aircraft to replace the British Lightnings whose useful flying life will end in the early 1980's, and in 1976 provided the Saudis with briefings and demonstrations of a variety of advanced fighters. Saudi Minister of Defense Prince Sultan informed Ambassador Porter in February of this year that the Saudis now wish to move forward in acquiring 50 F-15s, and the subject was again raised with Secretary Vance during his trip to Riyadh.

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